

Tom Jefferies
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Interviewed by Nancy Solomon

Total Time - 01:47:37

00:00 – 04:55

Baymen of Freeport. Born in Freeport. Freeport hospital. Born May 31, 1955. My family owned a fishing station here on the South Shore in Freeport. Grandpa introduced me to the bay. Taken out as an infant. Lived out there in the summer. My family, aunt and uncle, grandma, grandpa – that was my introduction to the bay - spent my 1st summer out there as an infant in 1955.

Can you described the fishing station and some of the things that happened there?

Our 1st fishing station was from 1955 to '59. The memories there are very vague. Have seen several pictures and located on Brand Point across from the fishing piers at Jones Beach. There was a row boat station at Jones Beach at the time – killies were the number 1 target for fluke bait. We only opened from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Grandpa and my uncle John Remsen – both John Remsens – targeted killies. Sold them to Captree State Park and the Jones Beach Fishing Station. They were their big accounts. Proximity was a big thing because we were relatively close to them. We would deliver by boat.

My memories are mostly of the 2nd fishing station – located in Long Creek – just south of the Nautical Mile in Freeport. The bay house is still there. We are still the only commercial lease holders in the Town of Hempstead. Killies are still king but I have fond memories of that. There the format changes. Had enough water where party boats coming out of the nautical mile going fluke fishing would stop by and buy killies, spearing, squid – whatever we had to offer- matter of convinence for them. We were only in busy open from Memorial Day Weekend to labor day.

My family – we all worked on the bay – part time or fulltime. We were emphatic. Brought up and drilled you go to school. That's why when Labor Day came. The good times- Tom Sawyer days were over. And you had to go to class. Those days were fond. Had a pretty good business. My Grandpa still dealt with Captree State Park which was a big account. Sometimes would take up to 300 quarts of killies a week. Killies are measured in increments of quarts not by weight. Live bait was king. Now everything changed with the advent of lores and frozen bait being easier to handle. Very few people fish with killies. But in the 60's up until the mid 70's killies were king. There was money to be made. Fishing was good.

Had quite the party boat here in Freeport. Some of the guys are still around. Captain Lou was a boat that would come. There was a boat named 'The Fun'. The boatmen Association which is still here in Freeport – believe had 12 boats coming out of there at the time. Then there were open boats – the 12 of the Boatmen Association were charter boats. Then there was an open boat fleet maybe 6-8.

Every day was good fishing. A lot of people came from the city, inland Mineola, Hicksville places like that to come out fishing for the day. It was an event. The Nautical Mile has changed dramatically. There were a lot more fish markets. A lot more tackle stores. Not as many restaurants as now. Change is not always good but that's the way I see it. Those are my first memories of being on the bay.

04:56- 10:00

Would work with my Grandpa – setting killey pots and picking them up as the days went by. My cousin Jon would do that as well. My brother was my grandfather's only full time employee. He worked the Bay, brother Jon, until he went away to college in Iowa. It was a good way to be brought up. We were taught to save our money and work hard. Never squawked because that wouldn't get you anywhere. Had a really good family unit.

Some of my fondest memories of life are about that. Basically that's it. Because we were not only work that at the fishing station - we resided there during the summer. 11 of us – 3 families – grandma and grandpa, aunt and uncle and their children and my mom and dad and their children. My father would commute by boat to work each day. He had a land job. He was a civil servant. My uncle John Remsen worked for the phone company. He'd get up and go home, go to work, then in the evening they would come back. Have a sit down meal and talk about how we helped Grandpa, probably made him miserable in reality, what we caught, what we did.

Certain times of the summer we would target killies, other times horseshoe crabs for bait. Eels sometimes. Spearing later in August. There was always something to do. Always satisfying work. Great way to be brought up.

Out of the 11 of us – girls didn't like it as much as me, my brother, my cousin John. It was more of a boy's paradise –understandable. As time went on, grandparents got older, tough for them to keep things together.

As we got older myself included, you become a teenage and want to experience life, being out on the marsh, on hot summer nights, is not part of being a teenager – we all went our separate ways. As time went on, we still have the bay house. Stay in constant contact. We all live in Freeport. Spoke to my cousin today. We have annual event out at our bay house. As far as working, it was tough – you never felt the cold or the wet. You were into it and you were a kid.

My grandpa had a great work ethic. He would not push you to work. He encouraged you to work. And you wouldn't want to let him down. Because he was very fair to us all. There were never any favorites. You would think that a man might say he's a little stronger, meaning 1 of the boys, will treat him with kid gloves, want him to work. We all had an equal share. We could all go with grandpa anytime – put net or deliver killies, whatever it was. There was work all the time. Sounds crazy but it didn't seem like work. It was gratifying. We were all paid. At the time a dollar was a dollar. If you made few bucks at the end of the week it was nice. We were taught to save.

My first boat bought when I was 12. I can remember I bought my motor - \$400 – 18 horse Johnson. Paid cash for it. I was very proud of that. Bought it from a man who still is very active on South Shore – Al Grover.

He still talks about it – because it's a funny story. Because when I went to pay – I was on my bike and money rolled out of my pocket and I lost it and I was lucky enough to go back and find it. It was all in a rubber band. That's how I got into it since I've been 12 I had my own boat.

Boats are functional – just garvies. Uncle's built over 100 of them. Never had anything but one of his. He just built one for me 2 years ago. Out back here. Named it "The Uncle John". The only one I ever named. I think I can get 1 more out of him – hopefully in couple of years.

That's how all it started. Lucky enough to pursue higher education –which thought it was great thing. But I always came back to the bay in the summers.

Can you tell me what you fished for when you got your first boat and how that's changes over the years?

10:00 – 15:00

When I 1st had my boat - trap eels in summer – which is not time to target them. But Grandpa had a few eel traps that he would let me use. I was adept enough at boat to out on my own. I would go killeying if he needed killies. But he would take the line and share that for him. Mostly what I did is tread clams - I would tread clams. It was never a problem getting rid of them especially in the summer. The price was fair. Go to 2 Cousins Fish Market which is still in business. And still some of the faces there. You get paid every day. We tread them - meaning we'd be over board – use feet and hands to get them.

As I got a little older and little stronger - I would rake clams. Became proficient at that. It was a little easier. You didn't have to get in the mud. You can take your shirt off – that was all before you can take your shirt off. Times have changed. Clams mostly when I first started.

At the time – a lot of the bay was open. We had good readings – I'm assuming – with the water quality. Baldwin Bay was open – which is only a mile and half from our bay house. Would go over and work the same flats pretty much consistently – very productive – in afternoon sell our produce – come home and sometime in the evening we would go spearing fishing right at dusk for fluke bait – pulling the same net.

We would constantly be active. It didn't seem like work. It was more fun. Grandpa would make it an event. He'd have everyone doing it. My aunt Grace would go with him sometimes and pull the net. She had her own weighters. My mom would go sometimes – she wasn't too good. She wasn't as good as aunt Grace. You have to call them as you see them. That was basically it.

As time went on, I got a bigger boat. Boats are an addiction. You always want to get 1 that bigger, better, faster, sleeker. My next boat my uncle built was a V bottom – fiberglass – was in its infancy. Made for a real durable boat – from an 18 horsepower went to a 40 horsepower. Which was quite a step up – they all tease me today. They say sit down in the boat because you can get tossed out of the boat – as we know with the more power.

Our family – Remsens – which is my middle name always been taught to sit in the boat, not to stand. That's a truism.

Had any learning experiences from other people that really taught you something important?

As far as the bay – funny – quite an inshore dragger fleet at the time- they docked behind 2 Cousins – when I would go up – unload my clams - were very encouraging. Things were wide open as far as the fishing. All the men – as long as you'd be respectful – and work you were their equal.

I can never remember on the water front all my life being talked down to, ridiculed – only encouraged by seniors. Fishermen who were real fisherman. Gentlemen I remember Frank Cona – he's still alive- he owned a western rig trawler called The Apache. When I was 17 I started working for him in the summers – because school was 1st. He taught me a lot. As I said - very encouraging. Never ever raised his voice to me – even if you would mess up on deck or something. You were taught to do it right. Do it slowly so you didn't hurt yourself – because it's a very unstable working platform – things were different. If you

were a kid and you were on the water – some friends still work the bay – the ocean and laugh about the old times - we miss them – but they'll never come back.

15:02 – 20:06

Frank Cona – still alive – was a fisherman – came to US after WWII. He worked hard – came from Brooklyn – had his 1st little dragger over there. Worked his way up – at the time his boat – The Apache – is still fishing out in Montauk – probably 45 years old – but boats at the time were all built well. All built down in Virginia. He just encouraged us – fair with money – treated you like family. Truth of the matter. What I went with as I got into my 20s – worked on draggers.

Boats were not as big and technologically advanced as they are now – steel boats very rare. Most of the bigger commercial boats now are steel. These were made of long leaf yellow pine as I remember in a place called Bena, VA. They were all the same.

Couple guys in this area who still have them - The Sturgeon – which I'm sure you've seen – built in same town by same builder. In the winter would fish for whiting- in the spring, would fish for squid, week fish, striped bass, in summer – fluke. Fluke always brought a good price.

When I got out of college in 1977 – went back to work for Mr. Cona again – couple of winters – as time went on. I started working on the bay myself. It all came back – mostly stick with bait mostly been god to me – and here I am.

Can you describe some of the fishing you did on Frank Cona's boat, where you would go?

It being summer most of the time, I did work winters for him, but summer was nice because you're in site of land – which I always like. I've been called a "Variable Tom" – not a hardened North Atlantic Fisherman. I like it placid – when its coast easy. Flukeing was my favorite.

We would leave a net with trawler – you catch them better usually in the evening in the dark – they come up off the bottom a little bit. We would fish – leave 10 pm – and be back 8 in the morning. But did have a couple of winters with him when we'd go whiting fishing – which sometimes the weigh would kill you. We would fish 2 places – 1 would be a fishing place the mud hole which is between here and NJ – a drop off the Hudson River – very deep – very rich with marine life – tuna, squid, porgies – itall goes there.

Whereas when we'd go fluking – Rockaway inlet to Fire Island. Methodical – back and forth. Sometimes you'd get lucky and have a good tow – which is what it's called when you pick up the net – a hall back. It would make for a good day usually. Regulations were a little more liberal at the time as far as fluke. We would do good with that.

But the whiting – there was another place – 1 was the mud hole and the other was The Light Ship – The approach to Ambrose Channel – there was a light ship there at the time – fixed station. There would catch mostly whiting. That was the target species – start around Election Day. That would go through till about Christmas. Being the winter as it is – the water would chill down and force the whiting off shore- which was being beyond the realm of the boat I was on with Mr. Cona. He would more or less shut down in January and February. We would hope for a shot of the whiting returning back in maybe March and April.

In the time Jan and Feb- if the bay didn't ice up – I'd go back to clamming. As most guys on South and North shore of LI – clams have always been good. It's a great thing to fall back on it. It's a good product.

20:07 – 25:00

Up until the advent of aquaculture – it's really put a hurt on the market – but true chefs know the difference between a aquaculture product and wild caught. That's how we know to market ourselves a little bit in past few years – so you get a little niche that way. Honestly believe people prefer a wild caught product – whether salmon, clams – whatever it is – it's not altered with chemicals or high speed growth hormones – which is the truth of it.

We'd fall back on the clams. 1 thing about working bay – it's very cyclical. Goes in cycles – if in the spring you can't get clams you try eels, you can't get eels, go killeying. Try this, try that. Each year it's a little different. God will shine on you and you will pick something out that. Physical game, but a lot of mental aspects of it.

My grandpa – will bring him a lot into interview. He was very good to me and loved him dearly but had a couple of expressions that were priceless. 1 – you can lift a ton, but you can't spell it – you'll be a good fisherman. 2. Strong back, weak mind- you'll be a good fisherman. These are sarcastic remarks, because that is very untrue. These days you'd have to be pretty slick, pencil's got to be sharp. You have to market yourself as well as you're product. Be reliable – which is a big thing.

As fishermen, some are very unreliable. As time goes on, that's been weeded out. In Freeport, there's 20 - 25 guys that work the ocean bay - could be few more – that are very reliable and are in it for the long haul. They've done well. I feel I've done alright. I hope I can continue to fish into my golden years. If I'm lucky enough to have my fluke permit, I would even pin hook fluke – as supplemental income.

Pin hooking is a term that is arisen with past 15-20 years, as opposed to nets and traps. Pin hookers use it to catch fish with a hook and line – same as recreational fishermen. Gives a better product – not banged up in nets. Now past 10-12 years – a market has developed in live fish. Oriental people and some ethnic groups prefer their product alive – in restaurant or bring it home – then they will filet it or however they cook it. It brings a better price. But it's very hard to keep the product alive. It's not an easy thing. And it's a lot to it. I never got into that but I can see as time goes on I might have to.

As I said – I'm lucky enough to have my fluke permit – as you get older it's a little more user friendly. It's easier on your back. Nothing's easy fishing – as opposed to weight years ago you'd have to catch 5 or 800 pounds of fish to make a day's pay or 2 men to make a day's pay.

But now if you catch 60 or 80 pounds of live fluke or live black fish – price is commensurate with the care and outlay of money you have to have to keep them alive. Have to have tanks and pumps – it's very involved. I know a couple of guys who do it. I think I'd rather catch and sell to them. 1 thing I've always learned just when you think the door is gonna close on you, another avenue to make a dollar opens up.

25:00 – 30:00

That's part of fishing. With America being so diversified and cultural – different people from different parts of the world – what we consider trash fish – 25/30 years ago – is now on the table of these people. It is a good product but we were just never brought up that it would be an edible product. Sea Robins for instance. Certain crabs, crab here in the winter that comes in shore called pinky toes – we used to

throw them over board now they bring a good price. Joneer crabs. Price of eels gone up dramatically because of because of fact of certain ethnic groups its part of their culture to have live eel at certain time of year for holidays, etc.

This year a little tough because had a real hard winter. Water never really warmed up properly. Went right into summer. Then we got hammered with hurricane – just couple of months ago. As to what I'm gonna do next spring, have to wait and see. One of the things that helped me out, NYS is 1 of few states you're still allowed to harvest horseshoe crabs commercially. We, myself and some other guys, would go out horseshoeing and that would compensate for lack of spearing – which was a tough year because winter and the snow and water not warming up – so the horseshoes took up the slack. Some of the horseshoes we harvested were used for medical research but most went to a fishery that has really blossomed to a money making thing for a lot of guys I know – which is conk fishing – whelks.

Don't have enough space here to fish them in this area of LI. But out on east end and north shore they have done very well. But the fishermen on east end and north shore need horseshoe crabs – the preferred bait – the price was right and that pulled up the slack. What I'm getting at is when you think 1 thing is going to close on you, another will open up. That's the way fishing is anywhere in the world I would think. It's never the same thing season to season which makes it interesting. It will test your endurance and ingenuity. When you go into something a little new – you have to experiment a little with different baits, traps, nets.

As time goes on, we're very regulated in Us and State of New York – which is good to certain extent but what we've learned to do is try and target certain species and stay on them as opposed to a lot of by-catch and destroying things that we really don't need. Gears, fishermen gotten much better. I believe this – fishermen do need to be regulated because it would be equivalent to the buffalo hunters if we didn't have regulations – that's the sad reality. Myself like anyone else, if you weren't regulated to a certain extend you'd probably hammer it to the end.

How do you harvest horseshoe crabs?

Horseshoe crab is ancient creature, prehistoric. Some amazing things have been learned about them – what everyone sees tv, natgeo. Creature that comes into south shore bays LI, and some other states – they don't know difference where they are. In months of May, June, July, on the moons to lay their eggs. They come up into the flats, into the sandy beaches, pair up male and female, bury themselves. Female will iin the sand, she will set the eggs. This is when we'll come up and take our quota.

30:00 – 34:45

Quota is regulated. We're not over fishing these things. Some states it's not even allowed to fish them – which is good. Delaware, NJ is closed. NY is open – good for us. I believe Mass is closed. Think RI is open. What this allows is the eggs to set up which are very important to the migratory shore birds. This way not out fished in every state. Here, the quota, in the spring will get a notice whatever the quota is. It will be in 4 increments for horseshoe crab. Usually only able to catch it the summer months, late spring months – when they come in to spawn. Rest of the time they're developing, becoming mature, not being caught.

Quotas at 1 time was 100 horseshoes a day, went to 200 a day. It's very hands on. Have to report every day. Forms, I send them in weekly – this way state of NY will know when the quota is almost reached. Then they cut it back to 30, then cut back to 5 for personal use. Very well managed. It's not overfished.

What's happened also on LI & I think is a good thing. There's certain areas where you are not allowed to horseshoe – national seashore, down in the Rockaways, parts of Fire Island, I believe & some parts by Rocky Point, but this is good because this allows the horseshoe crabs to setup a course and be prolific and breathe. Don't know the numbers. But I know something crazy that a female can put out as much as 100,000 eggs.

Nancy: I've been told a millions. Tom: I could believe it. And 1 thing I've never seen, my dad and my brother saw once going back to the bay house – very interesting – when these horseshoe eggs hatch it's a sight to see.

Remember a night they were going spearing fishing at night – which is sometimes better with the lights – they brought back a scoopful of horseshoe that had hatched – lucky enough to see. They said there was a river of baby horseshoes. I can still remember when they came back to our bay house and they put them on the kitchen table. That was the center. There was no cable to tv so that was the main stay of life was the kitchen table. We all looked at it – what would be equivalent to bottle of water – 12 oz. I could only venture a guess to how many little horseshoes were in there – thousands.

Never seen that would love to see that. My dad and brother heard fish and eels because it was a very still night. My brother John describes it as a river – 10 or 15 feet wide and it went for miles. The horseshoes had hatched on certain phase of the moon – I would set my watch by it. It's just not 1 moon – might be a June moon, August moon, whatever it is. And they were lucky enough to see it.

Amount of life in a little jar like that that night – it's like it happened last night. Must have been something to see. I'd like to see that some time. But it's something that may never happen. When we were kids, we'd get horseshoes for our own use – for killey and eel traps. Now it's used for medical research – blossoming conch industry – it's played into our hand. So for a year when our bait the spearing wasn't that good – the horseshoes pulled up the slacks. Unfortunately we all have to make money to pay our bills and that was part of it too. God bless the horseshoes - that was a windfall for me and quite another number of guys here in Town of Hempstead on south shore. Trying to think of other experiences I had but that night that was wild. I wish I had seen that.

34:45 – 40:00

Are there other times that you've been fishing that you're like I'll never forget this? Yea, we all have, as I said, family unit is very close and we all talk about old times, we caught this and caught that. Some things are burned in your memory.

Used to go jacking. That was a recreational thing, not crabbing. Have Coleman lanterns on front of a garvey – a flat boat – and spear fish and eels. 1 night was with grandpa and cousin John – cause boats were smaller than – were down in Jones' inlet and trying to hit some bass, maybe some fluke and you would literally spear them – spear with may 6-10 prongs on it, on pole 18-20 feet long. You wouldn't know it, maybe jab it. Right place at the right time.

We saw a common skate – at the time was a trash fish now it's an edible product – draggers will target it & people eat it. Venture a guess - we saw them on the move – whole bottom moved that night – there could have been 10s of thousands of them. You never realize how much life there is until certain times – fish a schooling species - will certain times gets in groups – could have been a night they might have been mating or something – have no idea, but everywhere we went there were hundreds, thousands of

them. They're called a common skate. Prehistoric looking. Seen thru eyes of a 12 or 14 year old. Almost spokie and eerie. I can still remember grandpa yelling 'don't stab those'. Don't spear those because they're no good for anything. Now they're problem a couple \$ a pd & they are good eating but who knew at the time. That was very vivid memory. Every night there was something to do in summer time. Very placid and still. Before a lot of the development in this area. People like to live on the water. And that's changed with time. There's that memory and have to ask cousin John about his insight into the 'Night of the Skates' as I call it.

One time I can remember – this was just recently – was with a guy I hired, we would target spearing and this was in September – had a good shot of the Long Island jetty inlet. We had a different kind of skate – called cow nose skate, these are much bigger. 1 afternoon got into them – it was like where the heck did them come from – you wouldn't think that there can be that many in the world. They were no good to us. That's part of fishing - you never really know what you're going to catch, whether you put it over a hook, net, whatever it is. Every day is a little different.

Yea I have duck hunted. Enjoyed it. A lot of fun, but thing as time has gone on, it coincides with work. I enjoyed it thoroughly. I like what they call 'jump shooting'. Walking the marsh at low tide. And scaring the black duck or mallard ducks out of the ditches. That was a little more challenging. I was never really much on sitting in a blind. I'm kind of an active person. Like moving around. I do know for a fact here in this area Freeport, give or take 10 miles either east or west of us – we have some of the best duct hunters around. Have some very good friends – still like to pull the trigger.

Lost a real good friend this year. He was king of duck hunting - Cory Weyant. I call me by his god name – Cornell – which he never liked. I did go to school with him so we tease him about that. I haven't duck hunted in several years. Only because either gonna go duck hunting or work and the opportunity to work sometimes in certain times of the year is a little narrow

40:00-45:09

And I choose to work – whether it be clamming or fishing – depending on the time of the year. Right now I can see the ducks are kind of on the move. It's October 19 – there are leaving the canals and going out on the marsh. I see black duck every day. Have seen brandt come in recently – sure sign of fall & winter. Still waiting. Very rarely see them but at night hear snoogies at night sometimes. Haven't heard them this year – high flying. They're a sure sign of winter.

But favorite duck and prettiest duck I believe is the mallard drake. The colors, the greens that you see can't find in a book – things we take for granted. Amazing when the sun hits it right. Haven't ducked hunted in a while. Always did enjoy it – keep my license. But haven't gone. I'm not saying I wouldn't go. The problem with duck – I tried a thousand ways to cook it – was never really palatable to me.

Some guys have a knack – Cory for instance – would mix it up in a chili, soups, stews. That was part of it too. Whatever I did shoot I would try and eat. Sometimes was a little tough.

There's an old joke. Good way to cook black duck. Clean it, take entrails out, get a brick, put the brick in the cavity. Put in oven at 350 for an hour and a half, baste it. Take the black duck out, eat the brick and throw out the duck. To me, they are bottom feeders. They eat mud and worms. You are what you eat. Some people swear by black duck but I'm not a proponent to that.

Like hunting. Tests your skills. Gives you different perspective. Sometimes when you work on the water, you got to enjoy things too – can't just look at it like I'm going to the office - otherwise you lose what I call "Eye of the Tiger" – the zeal to go. Sometimes it's nice if you have a nice day – im a firm believer in sitting down for a minute – having a bit to eat – looking around, listening, you never know what you'll see. Seen everything in the bay, in the inlet, from sun fish to pelicans, depending on the years, when we very hot summers, we'll get pelicans – very rarely.

When we were kids in Baldwin Bay, right outside my canal, we had some kind of sharks in here, police had to shoe them away. Depending on the year, had whales sometimes come in here in the winter, in Reynold's channel I believe it was white beluga whale – several years ago and had a great influx of seals in the past 10-15-20 years which when I was a kid, to see a seal was a rarity.

Grandpa would come and get us, there's a seal down at the beach -we would take a road trip - whether by car or walk to it. That was very rare.

But now – can venture a guess – in the winter have strong population of harvest seals and gray seals. Have some marshes where they sleep on land at night – not all the time – but I'm sure they do a lot of the time. I've seen as many as 60, 80 maybe more on 1 piece of marsh. Some of them – gray seals – are pretty big – believe they get up to 300 pounds.

Harvest seals – are a smaller variety. That's something that 20 years ago was a rarity – 25 years ago. What I read, not my pasturing, because the seal hunts up north have been limited dramatically so oc seal population grows and they get pushed further and further south. Natural thing –what happens we are in a populated area– these seals get pushed down here and unfortunately , hear that 1 will get hit by a boat. Sad state of affairs – that's the way it is.

45:09 -50:01

They are very proficient hunters – they eat 30-50 pounds of food a day – they eat what they want. Excellent hunters. Have seen them. Have friends who have been black fishing off the beach here in 40, 50 ft of water, reeling in a fish and seal will come up and grab it. It happens. He doesn't know it. He's got to eat – not his fault. That's something thing that's really come to life the past 20-25 years. As time goes on – there's another opening – see seal watching tours. Fishing thing. Party boat captains now. They lost some cod fish due to over fishing in 60s and 70s. So now in the winter they pull up the slack with the seal watching tours. They do very well with it.

Oceans and bays they give and take. There's always something that gives an takes – seems like. Hopefully it continues on. The only problem would be oc environmental damage, spills or chemicals and over development. It's already happened here. It has taken its toll. There's not much that could be done.

Here in US, we have some scientists who work on real aggressive measures to treat our sewage better and hopefully we can rectify what has gone wrong. It's not over by any stretch of imagination. Always amazed at the resilience of mother nature.

Ducks in canal – wouldn't think they would be up here because of the development. Fish, in this canal, have caught fluke up in here, ¼ to half mile in open bay. Blue fish, small striped bass in here. North of here seen perch – which is a brackish water fish. Eels. So the fish population is very resilient. They probably have more fortitude than humans.

In a typical year, I know that you work both on bay and ocean, can you describe the things you do in the bay?

Give you this year – started out clamming in Jan, Feb.

For clamming, do you have dig? Is the bay frozen?

The Great South Bay, which is east of us, that freezes very quick. But here we are lucky we have proximity to the inlets. We are maybe 4 miles at the most from my dock to Jones inlet. East Rockaway inlet is 8 miles to the west. And Fire Island's inlet is maybe 14-16 miles – what this does is give a lot of movement to the water. We still make ice. And we have frozen but we are 1 of the places that free up first.

Have probably 6-8 ft tide drop here every day. That keeps water moving. As we all know the more water moves, less likely to ice up. Have friends in Islip, that'll ice up – they don't have that tide departure that we have maybe 2-3 ft. So the water is still a lot of the time – that will make for making ice.

Back in Jan., Feb. this year we didn't make ice here in my canal. Maybe have ice in the morning but you can break through it. I would rake clams or what I prefer, esp in winter, because we get really low tides, exposes the clam flats to where they are bare. You actually get out of the boat, you anchor up, walk out on the clam flat and you'll have an instrument called a 'hack' – locally. Sure it depends on where you are – what you call it. Called a potato fork. It's really a gardening tool.

What you do is you turn over the soil, the sand, you find out where the clams and how they run. That got me though Jan and Feb till about mid March. Then I'll start bank muscling - which is bait for flounders.

50:01 – 55:00

Flounder population really dramatically altered here. Not what it should be. It could be seal population eating them – to over development, over fishing- have to look at yourself in the mirror.

Muscling used to start in Feb. because the seasons were open. No beginning opening day, no ending day. That's part of the problem too. That's why I always say we need to be regulated. But now the flounder season is from April 1st - May 31st. Short season. Not too many guys go bank muscling.

It's something my grandpa, entire family have done. I kind of know the spots.

What's bank muscling? How's it done?

It's called a rib muscle – name of it. Done by literally going into the marsh, the bog and picking them out with your hands. You wear heavy gloves. You sell them by the bushel. US bushel – a good day pick 8, 10, 12. Some days depending on the tide – go on the low tide – and work with the tide coming up behind you – this way the boat close to you. Sold for bait – sell to party boats – Sheephead's Bay, some tackle shops. Flounder pop is not what it has been in several years. Will muscle for maybe 6 weeks.

When I'm muscling, what I like about it, is, if we get any kind of spring – didn't really have this year – is up where I see the spearing which is my meat and potatoes – Atlantic silver side – universal bait for fluke, blue fish, anything will hit a spearing pretty much. I'll start to see them coming from the ocean, a pocket here – so I'm on top of it. As crazy as it sounds – where the horseshoes are – the spearing will be – the muscles are. It's all linked up. Sounds crazy – something to it. Something called an ecosystem. 1 feeds off the other.

Spearing for instance lay their eggs, on the bank muscles, the spearing eat the horseshoe eggs. All these creatures come together. Not same exact spot, but in the tidal areas, 4 ft or 6 ft tide drop on grass or bog, it's all interlinked.

By muscling I see if I have a chance to go to spearing which I enjoy & can be more lucrative than the other things, then I will sane spearing if I'm lucky if I have a year when they are running thick. Over the years I marketed my product, myself. It's not like I have truck loads of spearing. Try to put a real good product at fair price. Take pride in it. Ice the heck out of it. Have pretty good freezer unit. I market it locally. Some shops dealt with since I'm 12 years old – 2 of them. People seem to like my product. Will do that for months if weather is cooperating – the months started as early as late March – that was a year where it was a nice spring. Pretty much go with that all through the summer. Try and stay on what is called fluke bait – which is spearing, silver side, 4- 6 inches - hook bait. Put them in packages of 12 oz. depending on how well I'm catching. If I'm catching a lot will put them in gallon bags – which is 2.5 pounds.

There is a lot of handwork. Sometimes when the fish are running well, the easy part id catching them, the hard part is packaging them. I don't have the latitude to hire anybody. I can't really promise anybody paydays. I know it sounds terrible but I'm meticulous – like to say I put up every package. This is how I sell my stuff.

55:00 -1:00:00

Have a lot of avid fisherman – who will come down to my dock - they want my product. I take great pride in it. It's a little more lucrative. Know there's some bait houses- on LI – bait is a big business. They will catch spearing on a more grandiose scale than I do, and they'll hire people to package. When you're hires to package – it's not the same when you put your heart and soul into it.

Try and stay on the spearing. If that doesn't transpire – luckily here in Freeport we have a large amount of restaurants. You can always go back to the clam if you're a baymen. The price for clams go up dramatically in the summer. Easy to get rid of them – cause they are in demand.

The years I had off years with the spearing, I will go right back clamming. I will tread – what we did as kids. Now we use wet suits. When I was a kid, only Jacque Cousteau had a wet suit. Things were different. We hope over in our jeans and a pair of socks. This year was a little off with the spearing. So in June – started horseshoeing a little. That pulled up a lot of the slack. Had a gentlemen who came from New Bedford, Ma. Few of us who would pool our horseshoes together and keep them in 1 spot – easy to off load. Had 1 friend who had a dealer's license – were within the bounders of the law. So we can store them. This gentlemen would come from Newbedford 3 times a week. Using that for cod bait. Then had another guy who came from

South Jersey. He only wanted the females – said they were for medical research for Rutgers, marine biology program. that was used for that.

This particular year did a lot of horseshoeing in late May into June, until maybe around the 4th of July. Then continue to go back to spearing a little, did a little clamming. Much easier to hope in the boat when it's sunny & 80 then when it's Jan and 40. Overall it was an average year monetarily.

Then had a hurricane on Aug 28th. That threw everything into a tailspin. Been told by old timers, by Mr. Kona, my grandpa, guys who have been around it – hurricane is part of life. You have no control over it. It will change things sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse. This year – I feel changed things for the worse. But I just recently went fishing out in Hamptons Bays – guy I fished with said there's a salt pond out there called Mecox – hurricane was good for that particular salt pond because it washed in fresh water and gave it a charge of life. So they're looking forward to an oyster bloom out there in this particular bay.

This year, here, in my bay – the bay I work in – hurricane shook up a lot of things – not for the good. After that I didn't work for a while. What I do in the fall – starting Oct 1st there's a big niche of black fish, very delicious fish. Brings in high end, good money. What I've done in past few years is I've delivered – trucked – green crabs around for guys who pot them. In the past 4-6 years – it was no problem for a guy to go out who's working 50-60 traps to get 20, 25, 30 bushel a day or every other day. Didn't seem to effect the population the green crabs.

59:57 – 1:05:00

By me trucking it – it allowed a few of these to concentrate more on catching. So I would truck. Then I would come back and work on filling my striped bass quota.

The green crabs died this year because of the hurricanes – so didn't really truck anything around. Actually I would be doing up until Christmas, years passed. But that fell apart.

This year I fished on a gillnetter with a friend I've known for several years out of Hamptons Bays to fill my bass allocation. Did it a little earlier this year because of the lack of green crabs, the little void I had – I always have said, 1 thing goes, another comes. The green crabs went , but the bass out in Hamptons and Shinnecock Inlet - there's a good set of them this year. I was able to fill my tags in 4 working days in matter about 8 days. Had to wait for the weather.

We fished on a gillnetter. Fished in some rough weather a couple of days – it was not nice. But that allows for the price to go up. That worked for me – so as of couple of days ago – I finished my bass allocation. The fish were a real good size. Believe the price is very good because the weather has been up and down. You'll get 1 or 2 nice days, then bad, which allows - Fulton fish market when few fish come in – price goes up, when a lot of fish come in price goes down.

Fisherman I fish with is a hard fisherman – he has a real husky boat – 42 footer custom gillnetter. He's as sharp as a razor – good at it. He was on them and we were allowed to fish in pretty heavy weather – but that allowed the price to get up. Had the best price. Just had a return today, the best price I've ever gotten paid in my life. Still have a few returns. So what I'll do now, after filling my bass allocation which is done.

Individually this year it went up in the state of NY – gets 241 tags. It doesn't sound like much. But if you start catching bass – it's not easy to catch them – like anything. I have guys who tell me I can catch that in a day. Have heard it all.

This year I was lucky enough to fish with a gentleman out of Shinnecock. He was on them. Fish were a good size. In 4 working days I got my 241 bass tags. We filled another gentlemen's bass tags. A local guy was out there & captain had some bass tags. We were into them pretty good. This gentleman was more than fair. Good with the share. Whenever you work on a commercial boat, you aren't paid by the hour, not paid in advance. You are paid on what's called a share system – the better the boat does the better you do. It's good for morale – keep your head into the game because you know if you work hard and you're on them, you're going to have a good pay day. It's what I've done up until now.

Now will just finish up the year just hard clamming. Will hit a little lull around Thanksgiving. Because people eat turkey not clams on Thanksgiving. Get thru the holidays – hopefully the cycle continues. Can't emphasize enough as long as I'm healthy, I will continue to work it. That was this year. Next year who know – horseshoes might not be there, the spearing might be there better, flounder might make a resurgence, they might open up flounder so I might go bank muscling more. I really don't know what I'm doing season to season. Try and stay where you can do everything. Have eel traps, have green crab traps, have gillnets, had gillnetter in the past.

Now looking at small little dragger might go in with partner because fluking has opened up. Has been a great incline in fluke population. That's due to regulations. It's paid off- the hard regulations we've dealt with in past 12 years – are paying off.

1:05:00 - 1:10:00

Commercially, here in NY, some meetings I've attended. We will get a bigger piece of the pie. Now looking at small dragger out in Montauk. Don't know if I'll buy it. Boats are an addiction. You'll never have just 1. The way things are – and all baymen – you cannot say – I'm gonna go for sand eels next year – there might not be sand eels next year.

So what you gotta do is see what targets of opportunity present themselves. You never sell your gear. You hang on to your gear.

Grandpa had another expression – don't let the left hand know what the right is doing. Try and keep a low profile. Try and do well. Don't be a bragger. Because people might see that geez he had 241 bass in 4 days. But they might not see me Jan, be out in the cold and make 40\$ a day. I'm not complaining. This goes with it. When it's good, it'll be good. When it's bad, it's gonna be bad. But you never sell your gear. Boats you can move. You'll sell. Try this, try that. Had a couple of gillnetters in my life. That was ok. Gillnetter here hit the wall for a couple of years. So I sold my boat and down sized. But now as I said boats are an addition - looking at another 1. Continue on. Keep every ave open.

Keep your permits up. These days you have got to report everything which is fine. You cannot let your permit slip. I'm emphatic about this the way fishing is now. Come Jan, if you don't resubmit your paper work for next year, there are moratoriums on most of these licenses. A young guy can't get into it. It's kind of a shame but in a way – it's a dead end street. That's the way it is. If you do not keep up your permits, you are going to lose them and you'll never have the opportunity to get back to it.

You cannot let your permits slide. With the mort, you will not be able to get once it expires.

When I was younger, my mind set was, I'm only going spearing fishing, maybe do a little clamming. Would go out to Stony Brook and would get your licenses for the year. In the state of NY, started with what was called the food fish license. I said I'll never need a food fish license.

The woman out there, I'll tout her horn – her name was Evelyn Munch – she's still there – said Tom just get it. It's all included in your fee. What's so bad about getting it? So I got that. Then checked off horseshoe crabs. Said I'll never use it. But how wrong I was and how lucky I was that she had said get these things. And I was lucky enough to my fluke and striped bass permit – all because I checked the boxes.

It's a shame because so many guys my age – I'm in my mid 50s were the same mind set. I'll never go bass fishing. So they don't have the tags and now that would be a shot in the arm – financially for them. It's a shame but there are mort – these things are closed now. If you didn't get it when it was being offered, don't know the year – assume it's the late 80s, you lost your shot to get these permits.

I didn't realize it when I was young as most people didn't realize things when they are young, I'm never going to use this – you can never cut yourself short on anything. Especially with fishing. Don't ever say never. Because you might be doing it next week. Or have opportunity to do it or know someone that will hire you because you have the permits. Then that's what's happened. Was very lucky in that aspect.

1:10:00 -1:15:42

Annul permit costs - just under \$1,000. I have no federal permits. I'm only allowed to fish in state waters which is 3 miles out which is fine by me. Things cost. I have no problem with it but it's not getting any easier. This is just no tin fishing- in the world. Things are tough economically.

As long as it's well managed and state of NY allows us to work, give a good resource, a good product out, you have to take the good with the bad. Fishing is a business. To conduct business it's going to cost something. Whether it be a motor, gasoline, gear – meaning nets, traps or your permits – you have to factor it in. What I've learned to do it bump up the cost of my product or the price of my product to compensate. It hurts – meaning cutting a check but you have to pay and have to have it.

Without the permits, in defense of NY or other state, the marine biology departments in these states are not going to have the information which they do need to have the allocations – 241 bass tags for 1 individual or whatever the quota for horseshoes is that quota of the year. Without the permit fees you're not going to have the management which you have to have.

Some of this management – fishermen are chronic complainers – myself included, without this info for instance, the resurgence of the bass stock wouldn't have happened – the management of it. There was a moratorium on any bass fishing for number of years, people were saying government don't know what they are doing – meanwhile they did know what they are doing. Now bass are all over the place.

Used to have to be sharp to catch bass with a hook and line. You would have to have little techniques to catch bass because there weren't that many. Our population – in Hudson River – was affected by chemical outfall from the GE electric plant in 70s - PCBs. Almost did away with the entire bass stock. But thru restrictions, moratoriums, I'm allowed to catch my 241- I'm happy. Have no complains.

Fluke resurgence is due to a federal watchdog agencies that tripled, quadrupled the fluke population. So this is why we pay the permits –it hurts to pay anything. Hurts to go buy a gallon of milk.

Roughly a \$1,000 for me – not a corporate license holder. My licenses can't be transferred now. That might change or sold as time goes on. Some states you're allowed to transfer a lease.

In my case, I'd love to lease my fluke permit for the summer to offset my cost. Because I don't use the fluke permit. Might this year because that might the way it unfolds for me. Hopefully the state will get a little more understanding in their leasing and transferring of permits which other states are more accepting in that area.

They'll still get their right info because we have to fill out - Vessel Trip Report – VTR. Whether it be the day of the week depending on what you're fishing for- submit them monthly. This way someone out in Stony Brook looks at the info – they can draw that this many bass, horseshoes have been caught, etc.

Really have no problem with paying the permit fees. I hope it doesn't get too expensive – because profit margin is not there . it's not what you see when you watch the Deadliest Catch – which is a great show but state has to understand that Thomas Jefferies is a 1 man band. He's not a corporation- not bringing in 100 million pounds of fish or a lot of money. He can live comfortably & he'll do his reporting. If you start hammering us on the fees, it's not consummate with what you're making & your overhead – that's not a problem yet. Everything cost – gov is a little tough these days.

1:15: 42 – 1:20:25

A lot of maintenance, activities involved with fishing – can you talk about some of the things that you have to do when you're not fishing so that you can?

The other day, turned off my freezer unit because not economic for me to keep it running all winter – don't have any product in there. Small scale – my operation. But went to rise my compressor. I lost a lot of lady friends because of fishing – they don't understand if you take a day off – even running up to the highway to get fuel, or I have to mend a net, but that's work they'll say. In my eyes it's PM – preventive maintenance- even if it's something as simple as changing spark plugs in your motor, painting your boat, keeping your dock up. Almost never – few opportunities when you don't have something to do.

You might not do it because you're not into it that day. There's pretty much always something to do. If you let your hear slip whether it be your nets, traps - then you're not going to catch efficiently – you're not going to do as well.

Describe different types of nets and quantity, what that involves?

I have a seining net – it's an ancient fishery – comes from prior to mid-evil times – comes from River Seine in France. Very simple concept. You get the fish around the shore. Form a big horseshoe and corral them in. Drag them onto the beach, the meadow whatever you're working on. Then unload them into your boat.

Seine nets – depending what you're fishing for – the mesh size will change – the size of hole in the net. I was a very tight mesh because I'm not catching giant blue fin tuna. I'm catching a fish that's only 4-6 inches big. My mesh is 3/8 inch.

I make my own nets – I buy the material from a place down in Memphis, TN. I hang-in my nets – put on a cork line & lead line. And I make it since I fish by myself – I make it good for me.

Here in Town of Hempstead only allowed in town waters to fish in a net that's 40 ft long – which is fine. Certain towns you can fish in nets up to 100 to 175 to 275 feet long. I like it here with the 40 ft regulation because it cuts down on the competition. Very few guys in Town of Hempstead that will seine the bay because the bay is too small. But if you focus in on the right times, know the spots- you'll do alright. I hang my net a little different. Every seine net has a bag with a fisher pushed into so you can pick them up. It's not just a wall. Has a hole in it that goes into a bag – we call, it locally - a pocket.

I make my net a certain way – 1 wing – there are 2 wings to every net. Usually the pocket is in the middle and the wings are the same size. But in my case what I have done & it works for me, is make 1 wing shorter than the other. I'm always working, because I work alone, to the pocket. I'm working from the long wing to the short wing.

I found out with time I prefer hanging in my own net, tweak it with heavier leads in the middle, because this way it doesn't come off the bottom – and will catch the bigger fish, even the little fish – meaning the spearing are small – the bigger set of them will always go down to the bottom. They're the ones you want. You mix it up a little – get a certain net that works for yourself. Hung in your own gillnets when I had my own gillnetter.

1:20:25 – 1:25:00

Now has 6 or 8 seine nets. They tear up – you can't have down time. The fish are running and you rip up on a Tuesday afternoon, and you have to work Wednesday, it might be too much to sew. I've sewn sometimes. You have some backups. I try not to throw out any gear, even if it's old, I'll reuse it.

As I said here in TOH, only allowed a 40 ft net. But down in Jones inlet, you're allowed 125 ft net which I have as well. Certain times of the year I'll do that but, I will not pull that out myself, I can't. I'll pull that with somebody else.

I have eel traps. Didn't use them this year. Haven't fished them in several years. Killey traps. Has 20 eel traps. Some guys will fish 100.

There are no restrictions on how many can fish. What I've done when I was eeling – was only eel in the fall. Eeling is usual Spring and fall – sometimes in summer on a phase of the moon. I would like it in the fall because I would get a better price esp if I sat on them till the holiday. Had a friend who passed away who would buy them from me and he would smoke them. He's gone. He would always encourage me.

Fish the 20 pots then I would maybe I would go bass fishing for a couple days and fill my (quota). And do some other things. Or go clamming or truck around green crab. If you start fishing 50, 80 pots.

Do you build your own eel pots?

No. I have but there's a gentlemen and he comes from a long line of baymen, Freddy Verity, out in Suffolk County – he builds excellent traps. It will allow fish anything I can put together. Material is expensive, labor is expensive. Unfortunately you're going to lose traps – part of life. With the burgeoning population you always have people touching your gear. It's a same – it's part of human

nature. So I'm down to 20, think I fished 30 once. I haven't fished in them in several years. But it's something I would fall back on.

Freddie Verity builds a real good trap. And every spring if I get more money, I'll always ask him if you can make 10 for me. He'll wine a little, but he's kind enough to tolerate me.

His family originally came from Baldwin Harbor - rt across the canal from me and they were real baymen - meaning they build everything themselves - fished hard - it's all they knew. They were good at it too.

They all moved out east - Islip area, Lindenhurst, further out east. They recently lost a brother Jacky who was probably 1 of the best dealers on LI. Used to call him "Little Man" - was a small guy. Boy he was a handful.

These guys I remember going back to my youth, they would catch 8 -10,000 pounds of eel in the spring. The product had been here for starters. It hadn't been overfished. And Verities would build some classic boats - still some verity boats from 40s and 50s. They were a cut above. But everything changes and some of their sons and daughters still will not do it. But there is a daughter, Jessica, who works delivering bait.

Their sons, Richie and Billy, who I know well, they are real sharp clammers with rakes up on the North shore. That's what they've been doing to my knowledge.

Working on the water, you might know somebody's family, but there's a bond when you start talking. They know you come from good stock. Even if you haven't seen someone in years, haven't seen young Bill Verity in several years, but I know if I ran into him, it would be like nothing happened. Common link, common bond. There's competition - but there's competition in everything.

1:25:20 - 1:30:02

There are very few baymen left. Dwindling population. Recently had pleasure of meeting guy in Ed Gardner, out of South Hampton. He fished with me when we were doing our striped bass tags. He's a 6th generation baymen. Now he's targeting razor clams - he filled his bass tags like I did - out in Hampton Bays. I'd never met this gentlemen. We go down to the boat - boat leaves at 5 in the morning, its pitch black. I've been on the boat before. This was his first time this guy. It was like working with my right hand - nothing had to be said - had a great day. When you're around it - you just pick it up. Another boat - another day.

Did you have any close calls?

Sure everyone does. Doesn't matter if you're in the bay or in the middle of the Atlantic. You're going to fish in weather - that's part of it. You have to. Some nip and tuck things. 1 was right there in the bay not a half mile from our bay house. It was in the winter. There was ice around. I made the mistake walking around and trying to get up on a sand bar - went through the ice. You can't think that way - gotta prepare. In a boat you keep everything in it's place. There's a place for everything. Some guys throw their stuff all over. I have to have stuff in same place. I can walk in my boat with my eyes closed and pretty much find my way around. Everyone runs it differently - no one is going to tell you how to run it. Everyone is gonna have a close call. You are gonna come home some days when you're shaking.

When I was younger and lived home – I don't want to tell my mother this. She'd say 'what are you nuts?'

When I had my gillnetter one time – Pickerals – nice boat, very sound boat, a 30-footer with a deisel & a reel on it. Boat was sluggish – with the diesel – the boat only did 8 knots. Sound boat but she was not quick. There were series of hurricane off shore here – which makes for a big swell. Could be a nice day, beautiful, sunny, no rain, no wind – but there's what they call a 'developing swell' from the south east. You'll hear it on the marine forecast. What that is - these hurricanes are so strong – they push the water around for hundreds and hundreds of miles.

1 day I went out and they call for a developing swell. And the inlet here can be treatorous as any inlet anywhere. So I went out, it was high tide and said it's not that bad. Went down to the east a few miles, actually caught some fish. Pleased as punch. But in the intern, had forgotten to factor in that the tide had dropped 6 feet. So now there's white water pretty much everywhere – there's kind of a rhythm to it when there's a developing swell. 1 will come in and there might be a few minutes. Not exaggerating. 10, 12, 14 footers.

And what happens is when you get in on these things they will suck out the water from underneath you. It's a very hard feeling to describe. In my particular boat, which I loved, she was a little slower. Remember ji buoy about a mile out. I'm in a world of junk now. So I sat there and watched and watched. I came thru the mark channel – hoping there was water.

1:30:03 – 1:35:00

From morning to afternoon tide, I had lost 6 feet, so now the channel is the only thing that's really open and there are breakers on either side of me. The boat was very sound just didn't have the giddy up, the speed to get up and out of these waves. Realized had to take 1 at a time. And the waves were coming in shore. And they would grab the boat by the stern. The sensation is – called 'pitch poling' – didn't have it - thank god – you're going to go over from the stern to the bow. Not rollover from side to side. Got a little nip and tuck for a little while.

I actually kinda lost my composure – I wouldn't lie. I was going to turn around and go back out and wait for the next tide even thou it was going to be in the dark. Because that 6 or 8 feet of water would have helped me tremendously. But I kinda tucked it out. I had 1 break in on me – stuff flying all over.

The boat – an old expression – from Frank Kona – the boat will take more than the man and he was right. I didn't give the boat enough credit. The boat took it, squatted, water came in, the whole deal, the pumps were fine. But it was unnerving. The sound of stuff slopping around & you are afraid of the engine quitting. From 'shipping water' they call it. Water going into the engine box. But that didn't happen.

That boat was very sound. It took more than I could that day. When I got off that day, I was shaking like a leaf. That's the truth. Actually before I put my life jacket on, I turned on the coast guard station, channel 16 and made them aware that I might need assistance. They were very accommodating – stay in contact. And just give us a call if you get in or run in to trouble.

These are the things you've learn you gotta maintain. Very hard to do. Even in a garvey. Squawls come up in the summer. Get away from the motor. Pull up in the marsh somewhere. Bc of lightening – it will

hit the motor. Get away from the motor – sit down in boat – get right down. It will blow over, but it's unnerving.

You get that feeling, I'll run home and find shelter. I've sat under a bridge many a times waiting for a squall to go by. But that day in Jones inlet, I was definitely afraid and I got in. I looked at the boat and it didn't even sweat it. Boat was fine. It was me. But I'm glad I didn't turn around. I'm glad I stuck it out. I learned a lot that day even though I was well into my 40s. I learned a lot.

This boat can take it. Will take the shots. The man can't. The noise and the whining scares the man.

I have some friends who gillnet and a couple of them gillnet hard. Just recently a good friend of mine – you met - Joey Scavone – he had to wait 4-6 hours a couple of weeks ago. Got twisted out in the fog even thou, he has radar and everything. Sometimes that doesn't help. You have to just sit tight and wait for that window of opportunity because common sense will prevail.

Called him that day. Said he was alright but didn't know where he was. Had a little window of opportunity – a change in the tide and the fog lifted for a bit then came back in – that's when he shot in.

Things like that – will get scared – that's part of it. There's no way you can work on the water, even recreational fishing, you're going to get caught in it someday. What we call locally snot. Slop – it will scare you.

My greatest fear is lightening. Know 2 gentlemen who got hit and killed by it. 1 was a Verity – Elwood Verity /Richie Verity years ago & the other – can't remember the name. Lightening doesn't know what it hits. When you're out in the open, it will dance on the marsh – an expression we use. It will just bounce – looking for something that's up a little or something of metal.

As time goes on, you gotta realize to use good judgement, have good gear, there's no shame in putting on a life jacket.

1:35:00 – 1:39:56

You can be in a foot of water and something can go wrong. When you think you got it all under control – you don't. That's part of it. It could be something as simple as pulling up a trap and your feet slip, you hit your head, fall over board and adios.

Going down and hit a piece of debris. This is how we recently lost a real good guy and good friend. Because we all get complacent, myself too.

Sound korny and crazy, but we were always taught, you sit in a boat. To this day, my cousin jon – works the bay part-time, my brother who will go joy riding in his little garvey, we very rarely stand up – only if there's spray coming on us or something – for fear of being tumbled out of the boat. Will be on knees for stable platform.

With all the regulations and dangers, why be a fisherman?

I love novels about the sea, Herman Melville, Jack London. Its' because if you grow up around it, you might not admit it, you'll love it. You'll start getting good at it. Or as good as the resource allows you to

be. You'll find satisfaction in it. You'll find your identity in it. Then after awhile you'll be 56 and talking to Nancy Solomon. And that's basically it. It does get, I'm sure like a farmer, there's no difference. It's part of you – It's your identity. I like testing myself. Always been a physical guy, used to play a lot of sports. Get a great sense of satisfaction and release out of it. It's not bravado or machismo – not on my part anyway. Although with a few budwiesers in me, will stretch the truth a little.

Why the bay, why the ocean, what is it about it?

I grew up 1 block away from the nautical mile. As I said grandpa had a fishing, 2 of them – I was around it, exposed to it, it became 2nd nature. You don't even think about it. The smells.

Have people complain about the earthy smell of the marsh at low tide– to me that's heaven sent. Such a natural smell, life, a breathing living organism, even though it's not, it gives life to things. Fog. It's part of being out in the water. Wind. You gotta go out in the wind- gotta go out in everything.

You're going to test your metal – makes it very satisfying to sit down in recliner in evening knowing I gave it my best shot even if I don't hit a home run. Hey it's not for lack of trying.

Don't get in the boat if you're not going to try hard that day. You're better off blowing off the day & regrouping. Which happens. Sometimes you get burned out. Not opposed to going on vacations.

Learned esp now, pressure on me economically, if you get in the boat, you make a go of it, you stay till your done. till the tides at its peak. You don't – I got enough, I'll go home. You'll never get enough.

Meeting the quota – if you're allowed 6 bushel of clams – some days you can, some days you can't – but you try and get try and get your six bushel. That's what our allotment is here in TOH. Or whatever it is – you gotta saddle up.

I firmly believe, between growing up around it, played sports in competitive level in college, it will give you a good sense of discipline. I think those 2 things helped me with sports as well as with fishing – 1 helped the other. Very proud of both things. Have friends who look at me and they roll their eyes, but they know me well enough that they are very supportive–my entire neighborhood is very supportive of me.

1:39:56 – 1:45:00

Not to profile pple, but pple who have city jobs & do very well on Wall Street or when Wall Street was going well ask how do they bit today? It's a shot in the arm. I try to take them to the bay house and try to explain to them why I am this way. It's not a caste system. They treat me as an equal which I really like but it's nice to have support. I can honestly say on my canel here in Freeport, I have nothing but encouragement from everybody. That helps.

I have a neighbor across the cannel – saw you going out this morning, how'd you make out? When he gets off the train. Its shot in the arm & he's as old as me. He bought a little whalant, bc he wanted to go fluking, now he's a pain and a neck. He's always hitting me up for spearing. Jk.

Something you grow up with – used to think it was corny but I have a passion for it. As long as I'm healthy, know I repeat that – but that's the key. Without that – you're nothing. Esp in this game. You'll be cast adrift.

Other than that, that's it. It's a tough road. It's a shame over the years I've seen it. When I was a kid, the old timers would encourage you, but now there is not encouragement because it's kind of a dead end st. I'm not saying there will never be fishing, don't get me wrong, but it's very tough. The resources, developmet –

It's a shame if a kid or a young man gets out of college and he wants to give it a go, to say there's a moratorium – you can't do it – I have a problem with that. Let him give it a shot, if he doesn't like it, he learns something that he didn't like to do. I know many guys who used to work on the trawler – Apache – the day boat – it's a dirty job, there's a lot of lifting, it can get rough, I've been sea sick.

You get off the boat – and you learn what you didn't want to do. You can scratch that 1 off. Some guys take to it like a duck takes to water. Next thing you know, you get a post card from Alaska – salmon fishing.

When did you know you wanted to make this your life's work?

When I got out of college, I tried my hand at being a teacher & teaching is noble profession. Firmly believe education is great & I can remember sitting in the classrooms and stetching boats & not thinking. Quick story - 1 time – when I was in college, a freshman – English Lit, can tell you prof – Prof Meyer – had a call night before – my uncle Jon and cousin Jon had gone gillnetting and got 600 pds of week fish.

Here I am in upstate NY at a nice school & I'm sitting in English Lit drawing pictures of boats and this prof of & the difference between teacher in public school & college professor and– he's not going to ridicule you or brown beat you. He said 'what are you doing Mr. Jefferies?' I must have been red as a beet. He said 'you drawing boats? I don't think English Lit is for you.' I should have listened to him.

As time went o, I went to college. I got out. I tried. Didn't become a teacher. Didn't finish college. Quit at the end. Kids weren't as receptive to me as I thought they would be. I would always go back to the bay, no matter what. On the weekends, I'd go clamming. I didn't even realize it.

Tired my hand at a union job. Was a teamster. Truck driver. Money was good. Benefits were good. I can remember sitting in the truck 'Are you kidding me man, the fish are running.' After a year or 2 of that, I was like 'that's it, I'm doing this". Had good support from my parents, and my entire family and now my neighborhood.

You learn that that's what you're going to do. It kinda fell into my lap. When I was in college, I never really thought about it. When I came home in the summer – I'd go clamming. Because the money wasn't bad – the independence, it kept you in shape a little. Always went back to it. Like a skipped record.

1:45:00 – 1:47:37

I've been on vacations. Sat n room with pple I've travelled with and they say 'you're not here are you?' was thinking about what was going on at home. What kind of weather they had. One thing about fishing

and Cory used to say “no day’s the same.’ You don’t really have to travel because you’re going to get more excitement than you want once you get out of that canal. A great day on the water, is a day that is uneventful – meaning everything falls into place. No mechanical breakdowns. You didn’t get hurt. You caught and you made a day’s pay. An uneventful day is good. But you will have days and plenty of them in your life where the excitement, the fish are running, the swell is on, winds blowing. You’ll have plenty of excitement. It is not the same twice.

It is exciting. I like that – the physical and mental challenge. As time goes on, try to use my head a little more than my back. Meaning market my stuff. Truck stuff around. It’s worked out. It’s been very good to me.

But as with everybody, the economy, in it for the long haul, not going anywhere, the economy does put a strain on you. Fuel prices, the insurance, part of the business and part of life. Fishermen may cry about regulations, price of fuel and stuff, but very few heard them cry about their way of life and about doing what they’re doing. Deep down, they wouldn’t give it up.

Just read article that average age of baymen or fisherman on east coast of US is 47 years old. That’s very sad. Young guys aren’t getting into it because a dead end street. Where you going to be without us because you can’t eat farm raised stuff forever. People like the product we put. Hopefully will turn around a little and as I said will open up some permits to younger guys. At least give them a shot to try it. Even a temporary thing. But it’s been good. Hope to continue on. No regrets. Wouldn’t change a thing.

END